Scots language

Scots (Scottish Gaelic: *Beurla Ghallda/Albais*, Scots: *Scots*) is a West Germanic language variety spoken in Scotland and parts of Ulster in Ireland (where the local dialect is known as Ulster Scots).[3] It is sometimes called **Lowland Scots** to distinguish it from Scottish Gaelic, the Goidelic Celtic language that was historically restricted to most of the Highlands, the Hebrides and Galloway after the 16th century.[4] The Scots language developed during the Middle English period as a distinct entity.[5][6][7]

Scots is recognised as an indigenous language of Scotland,[8] a regional or minority language of Europe,[9] and as a vulnerable language by UNESCO.[10]

As there are no universally accepted criteria for distinguishing a language from a dialect, scholars and other interested parties often disagree about the linguistic, historical and social status of Scots and particularly its relationship to English.[11] Although a number of paradigms for distinguishing between languages and dialects exist, they often render contradictory results. Braid Scots is at one end of a bipolar linguistic continuum, with Scottish Standard English at the other.[12] Scots is often regarded as one of the ancient varieties of English, but it has its own distinct dialects.[11] Alternatively, Scots is sometimes treated as a distinct Germanic language, in the way that Norwegian is closely linked to but distinct from Danish.[11]

In the 2011 Scottish Census, 1.5 million people in Scotland reported being able to speak Scots.[13]

Contents

Scots		
Lowland Scots		
(*Braid*) *Scots*, *Lallans*, *Doric*		
Native to	United Kingdom, Ireland	
Region	Scotland: Scottish Lowlands, Northern Isles, Caithness, Arran and Campbeltown	
	Ulster (Ireland): Counties Down, Antrim, Londonderry, Donegal and Armagh	
Ethnicity	Scots	
Native speakers	99,200 (2019)[1] L2 speakers: 1,500,000	
Language family	Indo-European	
	▪ Germanic	
	▪ West Germanic	
	▪ North Sea Germanic	
	▪ Anglo-Frisian	
	▪ Anglic	
	▪ **Scots**	
Early forms	Old English (Northumbrian)	
	▪ Middle English	
	▪ Early Scots	
	▪ Middle Scots	
Dialects	Central	

	Southern Ulster Northern Insular
Writing system	Latin
Official status	
Recognised minority language in	United Kingdom (Scotland and Northern Ireland), Republic of Ireland
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	sco (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=392)
ISO 639-3	sco
Glottolog	scot1243 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/scot1243)[2]
Linguasphere	52-ABA-aa (varieties: 52-ABA-aaa to -aav)

The proportion of respondents in the 2011 census in Scotland aged 3 and

Nomenclature

Native speakers sometimes refer to their vernacular as *braid Scots* (or "broad Scots" in English)[14] or use a dialect name such as the "Doric",[15] or the "Buchan Claik".[16] The old-fashioned *Scotch*, an English loan,[17] occurs occasionally, especially in Northern Ireland.[18][19] The term *Lallans*, a variant of the Modern Scots word *lawlands* [ˈlɒːlən(d)z, ˈlɑːlənz],[20] is also used, though this is more often taken to mean the Lallans literary form.[21] Scots in Ireland is known in official circles as Ulster-Scots (*Ulstèr-Scotch* in revivalist Ulster-Scots) or "Ullans", a recent neologism merging Ulster and Lallans.[22]

Etymology

Scots is a contraction of *Scottis*, the Older Scots[14] and northern version of late Old English *Scottisc* (modern English "Scottish"), which replaced the earlier i-mutated version *Scyttisc*.[23][24] Before the end of the fifteenth century, English speech in Scotland was known as "English" (written *Ynglis* or *Inglis* at the time), whereas "Scottish" (*Scottis*) referred to Gaelic.[25]

By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the English language used in Scotland had arguably become a distinct language, albeit one lacking a name which clearly distinguished it from all the other English variants and dialects spoken in Britain. From 1495 the term *Scottis* was increasingly used to refer to the Lowland vernacular[11] and *Erse*, meaning Irish, as a name for Gaelic. For example, towards the end of the fifteenth century, William Dunbar was using *Erse* to refer to Gaelic and, in the early sixteenth century, Gavin Douglas was using *Scottis* as a name for the Lowland vernacular.[26][27] The Gaelic of Scotland is

now usually called Scottish Gaelic.

History

Northumbrian Old English had been established in what is now southeastern Scotland as far as the River Forth by the seventh century, as the region was part of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria.[30] Middle Irish was the language of the Scottish court and the common use of Old English remained largely confined to this area until the thirteenth century.

The succeeding variety of Early northern Middle English spoken in southeastern Scotland is also known as Early Scots. It began to further diverge from the Middle English of Northumbria due to twelfth and thirteenth century immigration of Scandinavian-influenced Middle English-speakers from the North and Midlands of England.[31] Later influences on the development of Scots came from the Romance languages via ecclesiastical and legal Latin, Norman French,[32] and later Parisian French, due to the Auld Alliance. Additionally, there were Dutch and Middle Low German influences due to trade with and immigration from the Low Countries.[33] Scots also includes loan words in the legal and administrative fields resulting from contact with Middle Irish, and reflected in early medieval legal documents.[34] Contemporary Scottish Gaelic loans are mainly for geographical and cultural features, such as *ceilidh*, *loch* and *clan*.

From the thirteenth century, the Early Scots language spread further into Scotland via the burghs, which were proto-urban institutions first established by King David I. In the fourteenth century Scotland, the growth in prestige of Early Scots and the complementary decline of French, made Scots the prestige dialect of most of eastern Scotland. By the sixteenth century Middle Scots had established orthographic and literary norms largely independent of those developing in England.[35]

From 1610 to the 1690s during the Plantation of Ulster some 200,000 Scots-speaking Lowlanders settled as colonists in Ulster in Ireland.[36] In the core areas of Scots settlement, Scots outnumbered English settlers by five or six to one.[37]

The name Modern Scots is used to describe the Scots language after 1700, when southern Modern English was generally adopted as the literary language, though Modern Scots remained the vernacular.

Scots was studied alongside English and Scots Gaelic in the *Linguistic Survey of Scotland* at the University of Edinburgh, which began in 1949 and began to publish results in the 1970s.

Language shift

above who stated that they can speak Lowland Scots
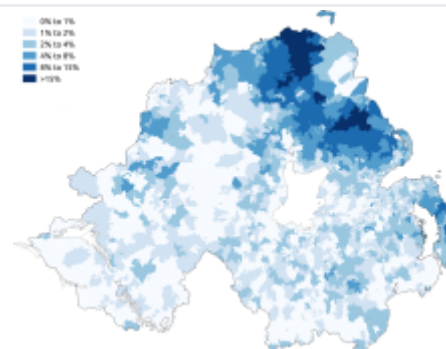
The proportion of respondents in the 2011 census in Northern Ireland aged 3 and above who stated that they can speak Ulster Scots
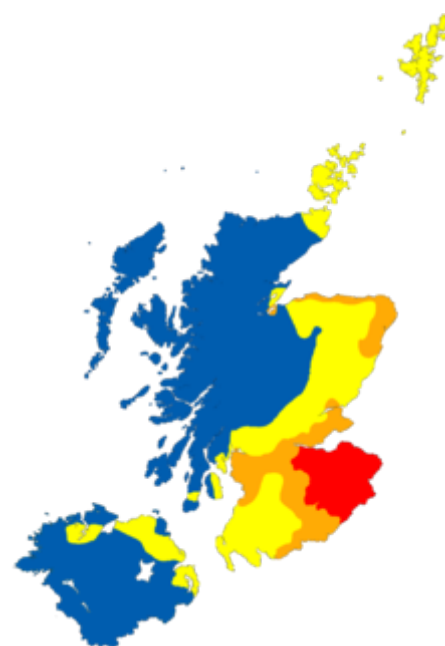
The growth and distribution of Scots in Scotland and Ulster[28][29]

☐ Old English by the beginning of the 9th century in the northern portion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, now part of Scotland

☐ Early Scots by the beginning of the 15th century

☐ Modern Scots by the mid 20th century

From the mid-sixteenth century, written Scots was increasingly influenced by the developing Standard English of Southern England due to developments in royal and political interactions with England.[38]

When an English herald spoke to Mary of Guise and her councillors in 1560, at first they spoke in the "Scottyshe toung", but then he "not well understanding", they continued in her native French.[39] King James VI, who in 1603 became James I of England, observed in his work *The Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Prose* that "For albeit sindrie hes written of it in English, quhilk is lykest to our language ..." however, with the increasing influence and availability of books printed in England, most writing in Scotland came to be done in the English fashion.[40] In his first speech to the English Parliament in March 1603, King James VI and I declared, "Hath not God first united these two Kingdomes both in Language, Religion, and similitude of maners?"[41] Following James VI's move to London, the Protestant Church of Scotland adopted the 1611 Authorized King James Version of the Bible; subsequently, the Acts of Union 1707 led to England joining Scotland to form the Kingdom of Great Britain, having a single Parliament of Great Britain based in London. After the Union and the shift of political power to England, the use of Scots was discouraged by many in authority and education, as was the notion of Scottishness itself.[42] Many leading Scots of the period, such as David Hume, defined themselves as Northern British rather than Scottish.[43] They attempted to rid themselves of their Scots in a bid to establish standard English as the official language of the newly formed union. Nevertheless, Scots was still spoken across a wide range of domains until the end of the eighteenth century,[40] illustrated for example, in the summary by Frederick Pottle, James Boswell's twentieth-century biographer, concerning James's view of the speech habits of his father Alexander Boswell, a judge of the Supreme Courts of Scotland:

> He scorned modern literature, spoke broad Scots from the bench, and even in writing took no pains to avoid the Scotticisms which most of his colleagues were coming to regard as vulgar.

Others did however scorn Scots, such as intellectuals from the Scottish Enlightenment David Hume and Adam Smith, who went to great lengths to get rid of every Scotticism from their writings.[44] Following such examples, many well-off Scots took to learning English through the activities of those such as Thomas Sheridan, who in 1761 gave a series of lectures on English elocution. Charging a guinea at a time (about £200 in today's money[45]), they were attended by over 300 men, and he was made a freeman of the City of Edinburgh. Following this, some of the city's intellectuals formed the Select Society for Promoting the Reading and Speaking of the English Language in Scotland. From such eighteenth-century activities grew Scottish Standard English.[46] Scots remained the vernacular of many rural communities and the growing number of urban working-class Scots.[47]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the use of Scots as a literary language was revived by several prominent Scotsmen such as Robert Burns. Such writers established a new cross-dialect literary norm.

During the first half of the twentieth century, knowledge of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary norms waned, and currently there is no institutionalised standard literary form.[48] By the 1940s, the Scottish Education Department's language policy was that Scots had no value: "it is not the language of 'educated' people anywhere, and could not be described as a suitable medium of education or culture".[49] Students reverted to Scots outside the classroom, but the reversion was not complete. What occurred, and

Statue of Robert Burns in Canberra, Australia

has been occurring ever since, is a process of language attrition, whereby successive generations have adopted more and more features from Standard English. This process has accelerated rapidly since widespread access to mass media in English and increased population mobility became available after the

Second World War.[50] It has recently taken on the nature of wholesale language shift, sometimes also termed language change, convergence or merger. By the end of the twentieth century, Scots was at an advanced stage of language death over much of Lowland Scotland.[51] Residual features of Scots are often regarded as slang.[52] A 2010 Scottish Government study of "public attitudes towards the Scots language" found that 64% of respondents (around 1,000 individuals being a representative sample of Scotland's adult population) "don't really think of Scots as a language" but it also found that "the most frequent speakers are least likely to agree that it is not a language (58%) and those never speaking Scots most likely to do so (72%)".[53]

Decline in status

Before the Treaty of Union 1707, when Scotland and England joined to form the Kingdom of Great Britain, there is ample evidence that Scots was widely held to be an independent sister language[54] forming a pluricentric diasystem with English.

German linguist Heinz Kloss considered Modern Scots a *Halbsprache* (half language) in terms of an abstand and ausbau languages framework[55] although today, in Scotland, most people's speech is somewhere on a continuum ranging from traditional broad Scots to Scottish Standard English. Many speakers are either diglossic and/or able to code-switch along the continuum depending on the situation in which they find themselves. Where on this continuum English-influenced Scots becomes Scots-influenced English is difficult to determine. Because standard English now

Lufe God abufe al and yi nychtbour as yi self ("Love God above all and thy neighbour as thyself"), an example of Early Scots on John Knox House, Edinburgh

generally has the role of a Dachsprache, disputes often arise as to whether the varieties of Scots are dialects of Scottish English or constitute a separate language in their own right.[56][57]

The UK government now accepts Scots as a regional language and has recognised it as such under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.[58]

> Notwithstanding the UK government's and the Scottish Executive's obligations under part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Scottish Executive recognises and respects Scots (in all its forms) as a distinct language, and does not consider the use of Scots to be an indication of poor competence in English.

Evidence for its existence as a separate language lies in the extensive body of Scots literature, its independent – if somewhat fluid – orthographic conventions and in its former use as the language of the original Parliament of Scotland.[59] Because Scotland retained distinct political, legal, and religious systems after the Union, many Scots terms passed into Scottish English.

Language revitalisation

During the 2010s, attitudes towards Scots somewhat changed and increased interest was expressed in the language.

Education

The status of the language was raised in Scottish schools,[60] with Scots being included in the new national school curriculum.[61] Previously in Scotland's schools there had been little education taking place through the medium of Scots, although it may have been covered superficially in English lessons, which could entail reading some Scots literature and observing the local dialect. Much of the material used was often Standard English disguised as Scots, which caused upset among proponents of Standard English and proponents of Scots alike.[62] One example of the educational establishment's approach to Scots is, "Write a poem in Scots. (It is important not to be worried about spelling in this – write as you hear the sounds in your head.)",[63] whereas guidelines for English require teaching pupils to be "writing fluently and legibly with accurate spelling and punctuation".[64]

A course in Scots language and culture delivered through the medium of Standard English and produced by the Open University (OU) in Scotland, the Open University's School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, and Education Scotland, became available online for the first time in December 2019.[65]
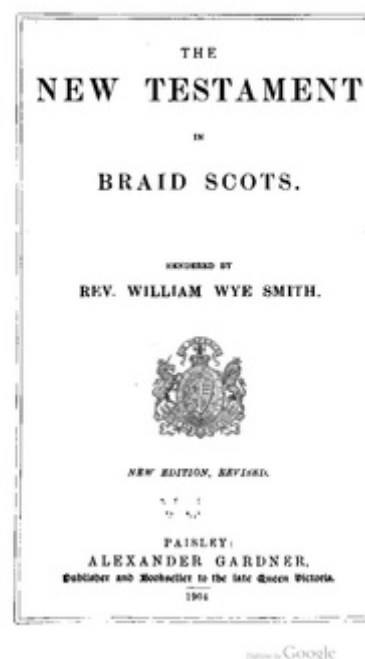
William Wye Smith's *The New Testament in Braid Scots*.

Government

In the 2011 Scottish census, a question on Scots language ability was featured[66] and is planned to be again in the 2021 census.[67]

The Scottish government set its first Scots Language Policy in 2015, in which it pledged to support its preservation and encourage respect, recognition and use of Scots.[66] The Scottish Parliament website also offers some information on the language in Scots.[68]

Media

Serious use of the language for news, encyclopaedias, documentaries, etc., remains rare and usually reserved for niches where it is deemed acceptable, e.g. comedy, Burns Night, or representations of traditions and times gone by. However, since 2016 The National newspaper has regularly published some news articles in the language.[69] The 2010s also saw an increasing number of English books translated in Scots and becoming widely available, particularly those in popular children's fiction series such as The Gruffalo, Harry Potter and several by Roald Dahl.[70]

Geographic distribution

In Scotland, Scots is spoken in the Scottish Lowlands, the Northern Isles, Caithness, Arran and Campbeltown. In Ulster (Ireland) it is spoken in the Counties of Down, Antrim, Londonderry and Donegal. Dialects include Insular Scots, Northern Scots, Central Scots, Southern Scots and Ulster Scots.

It has been difficult to determine the number of speakers of Scots via census, because many respondents might interpret the question "Do you speak Scots?" in different ways. Campaigners for Scots pressed for this question to be included in the 2001 UK National Census. The results from a 1996 trial before the Census, by the General Register Office for Scotland,[71] suggested that there were around 1.5 million speakers of Scots, with 30% of Scots responding "Yes" to the question "Can you speak the Scots language?", but only 17%

responding "Aye" to the question "Can you speak Scots?". (It was also found that older, working-class people were more likely to answer in the affirmative.) The University of Aberdeen Scots Leid Quorum performed its own research in 1995, cautiously suggesting that there were 2.7 million speakers, though with clarification as to why these figures required context.[72]

The GRO questions, as freely acknowledged by those who set them, were not as detailed and as systematic as the University of Aberdeen ones, and only included reared speakers, not those who had learned the language. Part of the difference resulted from the central question posed by surveys: "Do you speak Scots?". In the Aberdeen University study, the question was augmented with the further clause "... or a dialect of Scots such as Border etc.", which resulted in greater recognition from respondents. The GRO concluded that there simply was not enough linguistic self-awareness amongst the Scottish populace, with people still thinking of themselves as speaking badly pronounced, grammatically inferior English rather than Scots, for an accurate census to be taken. The GRO research concluded that "[a] more precise estimate of genuine Scots language ability would require a more in-depth interview survey and may involve asking various questions about the language used in different situations. Such an approach would be inappropriate for a Census." Thus, although it was acknowledged that the "inclusion of such a Census question would undoubtedly raise the profile of Scots", no question about Scots was, in the end, included in the 2001 Census.[56][73][74] The Scottish Government's *Pupils in Scotland Census 2008*[75] found that 306 pupils spoke Scots as their main home language. A Scottish Government study in 2010 found that 85% of around 1000 respondents (being a representative sample of Scotland's adult population) claim to speak Scots to varying degrees.[53]

The 2011 UK census was the first to ask residents of Scotland about Scots. A campaign called Aye Can was set up to help individuals answer the question.[76][77] The specific wording used was "Which of these can you do? Tick all that apply" with options for 'Understand', 'Speak', 'Read' and 'Write' in three columns: English, Scottish Gaelic and Scots.[78] Of approximately 5.1 million respondents, about 1.2 million (24%) could speak, read and write Scots, 3.2 million (62%) had no skills in Scots and the remainder had some degree of skill, such as understanding Scots (0.27 million, 5.2%) or being able to speak it but not read or write it (0.18 million, 3.5%).[79] There were also small numbers of Scots speakers recorded in England and Wales on the 2011 Census, with the largest numbers being either in bordering areas (e.g. Carlisle) or in areas that had recruited large numbers of Scottish workers in the past (e.g. Corby or the former mining areas of Kent).[80]

Literature

Among the earliest Scots literature is John Barbour's *Brus* (fourteenth century), Wyntoun's *Cronykil* and Blind Harry's *The Wallace* (fifteenth century). From the fifteenth century, much literature based on the Royal Court in Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews was produced by writers such as Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, Gavin Douglas and David Lyndsay. *The Complaynt of Scotland* was an early printed work in Scots. The *Eneados* is a Middle Scots translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, completed by Gavin Douglas in 1513.

After the seventeenth century, anglicisation increased. At the time, many of the oral ballads from the borders and the North East were written down. Writers of the period were Robert Sempill, Robert Sempill the younger, Francis Sempill, Lady Wardlaw and Lady Grizel Baillie.

In the eighteenth century, writers such as Allan Ramsay, Robert Burns, James Orr, Robert Fergusson and Walter Scott continued to use Scots – Burns's "Auld Lang Syne" is in Scots, for example. Scott introduced vernacular dialogue to his novels. Other well-known authors like Robert Louis Stevenson, William Alexander, George MacDonald, J. M. Barrie and other members of the Kailyard school like Ian Maclaren also wrote in Scots or used it in dialogue.

In the Victorian era popular Scottish newspapers regularly included articles and commentary in the vernacular, often of unprecedented proportions.[81]

In the early twentieth century, a renaissance in the use of Scots occurred, its most vocal figure being Hugh MacDiarmid whose benchmark poem "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" (1926) did much to demonstrate the power of Scots as a modern idiom. Other contemporaries were Douglas Young, John Buchan, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Robert Garioch, Edith Anne Robertson and Robert McLellan. The revival extended to verse and other literature.

In 1955 three Ayrshire men – Sandy MacMillan, an English teacher at Ayr Academy; Thomas Limond, noted town Chamberlain of Ayr; and A.L. (Ross) Taylor, Rector of Cumnock Academy – collaborated to write *Bairnsangs* (Child Songs),[82] a collection of children's nursery rhymes and poems in Scots. The book contains a five-page glossary of contemporary Scots words and their pronunciations.

Alexander Gray's translations into Scots constitute the greater part of his work, and are the main basis for his reputation.

In 1983 William Laughton Lorimer's translation of the New Testament from the original Greek was published.

Highly anglicised Scots is sometimes used in contemporary fiction, for example, the Edinburgh dialect of Scots in *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh (later made into a motion picture of the same name).

But'n'Ben A-Go-Go by Matthew Fitt is a cyberpunk novel written entirely in what Wir Ain Leid[83] (Our Own Language) calls "General Scots". Like all cyberpunk work, it contains imaginative neologisms.

The *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* has been translated into Scots by Rab Wilson (published in 2004). Alexander Hutchison has translated the poetry of Catullus into Scots, and in the 1980s, Liz Lochhead produced a Scots translation of *Tartuffe* by Molière. J. K. Annand translated poetry and fiction from German and medieval Latin into Scots.

The strip cartoons *Oor Wullie* and *The Broons* in the *Sunday Post* use some Scots. In 2018, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stane* was published, a Scots translation of the first Harry Potter book by Matthew Fitt.

Phonology

Vowels

The vowel system of Modern Scots:[84]

Play media
Wikitongues - Scottish poet Christine De Luca speaking the Shetland dialect of Scots

Aitken	IPA	Common spellings
1	short /əi/ long /ɑɪ/	i-e, y-e, ey
2	/i/	ee, e-e, ie
3	/ei/[a]	ei, ea
4	/e/	a-e, #ae
5	/o/	oa, o-e
6	/u/	ou, oo, u-e
7	/ø/[b][c]	ui, eu[c]
8	/eː/	ai, #ay
8a	/əi/	i-e, y-e, ey
9	/oe/	oi, oy
10	/əi/	i-e, y-e, ey
11	/iː/	#ee, #ie
12	/ɑː, ɔː/	au, #aw
13	/ʌu/[d]	ow, #owe
14	/ju/	ew
15	/ɪ/	i
16	/ɛ/	e
17	/ɑ, a/	a
18	/ɔ/[e]	o
19	/ʌ/	u

a. With the exception of North Northern dialects[85] this vowel has generally merged with vowels 2, 4 or 8.
b. Merges with vowels 15. and 8. in central dialects and vowel 2 in Northern dialects.
c. Also /(j)u/ or /(j)ʌ/ before /k/ and /x/ depending on dialect.
d. Monophthongisation to /o/ may occur before /k/.
e. Some mergers with vowel 5.

Vowel length is usually conditioned by the Scottish Vowel Length Rule.

Consonants

		Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal		m		n			ŋ[a]	
Stop		p b		t d[b]			k g[c]	ʔ
Affricate					tʃ dʒ[d]			
Fricative		f v	θ ð[e]	s z[f]	ʃ ʒ	ç[g]	x[g]	h
Approximant	central			ɹ[h]		j	ʍ[i] w	
	lateral			l				
Trill				r[h]				

a. Spelt *ng*, always /ŋ/.[86]

b. /t/ may be a glottal stop between vowels or word final.[87] In Ulster dentalised pronunciations may also occur, also for /d/.

c. In Northern dialects the clusters *kn* and *gn* may be realised as /kn/, /tn/ and /gn/[87] e.g. *knap* (talk), *knee*, *knowe* (knoll), etc.

d. The cluster *nch* is usually realised /nʃ/[88] e.g. *brainch* (branch), *dunch* (push), etc.

e. Spelt *th*. In Mid Northern varieties an intervocallic /ð/ may be realised /d/.[89] Initial 'th' in *thing*, *think* and *thank*, etc. may be /h/.[90]

f. Both /s/ and /z/ may be spelt *s* or *se*. *Z* is seldom used for /z/ but may occur in some words as a substitute for the older ⟨ȝ⟩ (yogh) realised /jɪ/ or /ŋ/. For example: *brulzie* (broil), *gaberlunzie* (a beggar) and the names *Menzies*, *Finzean*, *Culzean*, *Mackenzie* etc.

g. Spelt *ch*, also *gh*. Medial 'cht' may be /ð/ in Northern dialects. *loch* (fjord or lake), *nicht* (night), *dochter* (daughter), *dreich* (dreary), etc. Similar to the German "Na*ch*t".[91] The spelling *ch* is realised /tʃ/ word initially or where it follows 'r' e.g. *airch* (arch), *mairch* (march), etc.

h. Spelt *r* and pronounced in all positions,[92] i.e. rhotically.

i. *W* /w/ and *wh* /ʍ/, older /xʍ/, do not merge.[91] Northern dialects also have /f/ for /ʍ/.[90] The cluster *wr* may be realised /wr/, more often /r/, but may be /vr/ in Northern dialects[90] e.g. *wrack* (wreck), *wrang* (wrong), *write*, *wrocht* (worked), etc.

Orthography

The orthography of Early Scots had become more or less standardised[93] by the middle to late sixteenth century.[94] After the Union of the Crowns in 1603 the Standard English of England came to have an increasing influence on the spelling of Scots[95] through the increasing influence and availability of books printed in England. After the Acts of Union in 1707 the emerging Scottish form of Standard English replaced Scots for most formal writing in Scotland.[40]

The eighteenth-century Scots revival saw the introduction of a new literary language descended from the old court Scots, but with an orthography that had abandoned some of the more distinctive old Scots spellings[96] and adopted many standard English spellings. Despite the updated spelling, however, the rhymes make it clear that a Scots pronunciation was intended.[97] These writings also introduced what came to be known as the apologetic apostrophe,[98] generally occurring where a consonant exists in the Standard English cognate. This Written Scots drew not only on the vernacular but also on the King James Bible and was also heavily influenced by the norms and conventions of Augustan English poetry.[99] Consequently, this written Scots looked very similar to contemporary Standard English, suggesting a somewhat modified version of that, rather than a distinct speech form with a phonological system which had been developing independently for

many centuries.[100] This modern literary dialect, 'Scots of the book' or Standard Scots[101][102] once again gave Scots an orthography of its own, lacking neither "authority nor author."[103] This literary language used throughout Lowland Scotland and Ulster,[104] embodied by writers such as Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson, Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Murray, David Herbison, James Orr, James Hogg and William Laidlaw among others, is well described in the 1921 Manual of Modern Scots.[105]

Other authors developed dialect writing, preferring to represent their own speech in a more phonological manner rather than following the pan-dialect conventions of modern literary Scots,[97] especially for the northern[106] and insular dialects of Scots.

During the twentieth century a number of proposals for spelling reform were presented. Commenting on this, John Corbett (2003: 260) writes that "devising a normative orthography for Scots has been one of the greatest linguistic hobbies of the past century." Most proposals entailed regularising the use of established eighteenth and nineteenth century conventions, in particular the avoidance of the apologetic apostrophe which supposedly represented "missing" English letters. Such letters were never actually missing in Scots. For example, in the fourteenth century, Barbour spelt the Scots cognate of 'taken' as *tane*. Because there has been no *k* in the word for over 700 years, representing its omission with an apostrophe seems pointless. The current spelling is usually *taen*.

Through the twentieth century, with the decline of spoken Scots and knowledge of the literary tradition, phonetic (often humorous) representations became more common.

Grammar

Modern Scots follows the subject–verb–object sentence structure as does Standard English. However, the word order *He turnt oot the licht* to 'He turned the light out' and *Gie's it* (*Give us it*) to 'Give it to me' may be preferred.[107]

The indefinite article *a* may be used before both consonants and vowels. The definite article *the* is used before the names of seasons, days of the week, many nouns, diseases, trades and occupations, sciences and academic subjects.[108] It is also often used in place of the indefinite article and instead of a possessive pronoun.[109]

Scots includes some strong plurals such as *ee*/*een* (eye/eyes), *cauf*/*caur* (calf/calves), *horse*/*horse* (horse/horses), *cou*/*kye* (cow/cows) and *shae*/*shuin* (shoe/shoes) that survived from Old English into Modern Scots but have become weak plurals in Standard Modern English – *ox*/*oxen* and *child*/*children* being exceptions.[110][111] Nouns of measure and quantity remain unchanged in the plural.[111][112]

The relative pronoun is *that* for all persons and numbers, but may be elided.[111][113] Modern Scots also has a third adjective/adverb *this-that-yon*/*yonder* (*thon*/*thonder*) indicating something at some distance.[111] *Thir* and *thae* are the plurals of *this* and *that* respectively.

The present tense of verbs adheres to the Northern subject rule whereby verbs end in *-s* in all persons and numbers except when a single personal pronoun is next to the verb.[111][114] Certain verbs are often used progressively[111] and verbs of motion may be dropped before an adverb or adverbial phrase of motion.[107]

Many verbs have strong or irregular forms which are distinctive from Standard English.[111][115] The regular past form of the weak or regular verbs is *-it, -t* or *-ed*, according to the preceding consonant or vowel.[111][116]

The present participle and gerund *in* are now usually /ən/[117] but may still be differentiated /ən/ and /in/ in Southern Scots[118] and, /ən/ and /ɪn/ North Northern Scots.

The negative particle is *na,* sometimes spelled *nae,* e.g. *canna* (can't), *daurna* (daren't), *michtna* (mightn't).[119]

Adverbs usually take the same form as the verb root or adjective especially after verbs. *Haein a real guid day* (Having a really good day). *She's awfu fauchelt* (She's awfully tired).

Sample text of Modern Scots

From *The Four Gospels in Braid Scots* (William Wye Smith) Matthew:1:18ff

> Noo the nativitie o' Jesus Christ was this gate: whan his mither Mary was mairry't till Joseph, 'or they cam thegither, she was fund wi' bairn o' the Holie Spirit.
> Than her guidman, Joseph, bein an upricht man, and no desirin her name sud be i' teh mooth o' the public, was ettlin to pit her awa' hidlins.
> But as he had thir things in his mind, see! an Angel o' the Lord appear't to him by a dream, sayin, "Joseph, son o' Dauvid, binna feared to tak till ye yere wife, Mary; for that whilk is begotten in her is by the Holie Spirit.
> "And she sall bring forth a son, and ye sal ca' his name Jᴇsus ; for he sal save his folk frae their sins."
> Noo, a' this was dune, that it micht come to pass what was said by the Lord throwe the prophet,
> "Tak tent! a maiden sal be wi' bairn, and sal bring forth a son; and they wull ca' his name Emmanuel," whilk is translatit, "God wi' us."
> Sae Joseph, comin oot o' his sleep, did as the Angel had bidden him, and took till him his wife.
> And leev'd in continence wi' her till she had brocht forth her firstborn son; and ca'd his name Jᴇsus.

From *The New Testament in Scots* (William Laughton Lorimer 1885–1967) Matthew:1:18ff

> This is the storie o the birth o Jesus Christ. His mither Mary wis trystit til Joseph, but afore they war mairriet she wis fund tae be wi bairn bi the Halie Spírit. Her husband Joseph, honest man, hed nae mind tae affront her afore the warld an wis for brakkin aff their tryst hidlinweys; an sae he wis een ettlin tae dae, whan an angel o the Lord kythed til him in a draim an said til him, "Joseph, son o Dauvit, be nane feared tae tak Mary your trystit wife intil your hame; the bairn she is cairrein is o the Halie Spírit. She will beir a son, an the name ye ar tae gíe him is Jesus, for he will sauf his fowk frae their sins."

> Aa this happent at the wurd spokken bi the Lord throu the Prophet micht be fulfilled: Behaud, the virgin wil bouk an beir a son, an they will caa his name Immanuel – that is, "God wi us".

> Whan he hed waukit frae his sleep, Joseph did as the angel hed bidden him, an tuik his trystit wife hame wi him. But he bedditna wi her or she buir a son; an he caa'd the bairn Jesus.

See also

- Bungi Creole of the Canadian Metis people of Scottish/British descent
- Doric dialect (Scotland)
- Glasgow patter
- Billy Kay
- Languages of the United Kingdom
- Phonological history of Scots

- Scotticism
- Scottish Corpus of Texts and Speech
- Scottish literature

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Collections of texts

- ScotsteXt (http://www.scotstext.org/) – books, poems and texts in Scots
- Scots Threap (https://sites.google.com/site/scotsthreip/)
- Scottish Corpus of Texts & Speech (http://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk/) – Multimedia corpus of Scots and Scottish English
- BBC Voices, Scots section (http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/multilingual/scots.shtml) – The BBC Voices Project is a major though informal look at UK language and speech
- Scots Syntax Atlas (https://scotssyntaxatlas.ac.uk/)